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RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA IMMEDIATE 0001  
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE 0860  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 002866

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV CH EZ LO GE SCUL

SUBJECT: SUBJECT: SCHOLAR SAYS PRC EFFORTS TO CURB OVERSEAS  
DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES VARY ACCORDING TO INFLUENCE OF  
COUNTRIES INVOLVED

BEIJING 00002866 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carls  
on for reasons  
1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary: PRC efforts to curb Chinese dissident activities abroad are directly proportional to PRC perceptions of influence of the countries involved, according to a Chinese scholar. For example, China will take some action should its demands that no "controversial" figures attend the October 14-18 Frankfurt Book Fair (where China is the Guest of Honor) not be met, because China considers Germany an influential country. In contrast, the PRC is unlikely to go beyond harsh words in response to dissident activities conducted in smaller countries, such as the Dalai Lama's recent visits to Slovakia and the Czech Republic, our contact asserted. German Embassy contacts confirmed Chinese skittishness over dissident participation at the Frankfurt Book Fair, while Czech and Slovak diplomats downplayed repercussions over the Dalai Lama's visits. End Summary.

China to Make an Example of Germany If Offended

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¶2. (C) In a September 29 meeting with PolOff, Euro-Asian Social Development Research Institute European Studies Professor Ma Xipu said that the high-profile nature of the Frankfurt Book Fair and China's status as Guest of Honor had prompted the PRC to insist to Fair organizers that nothing objectionable be allowed to occur, particularly the attendance of high-profile dissidents, such as the Dalai Lama or Rebiya Kadeer. Professor Ma said provocative acts by dissidents occurred in many countries, but Beijing reserved retaliatory responses for influential countries, such as Germany. Ma claimed that retaliation would be aimed at sending a clear message to Germany that the bilateral relationship could be impacted and the Book Fair itself undermined. Any response would also be calculated to send a clear message to the United States, especially in light of a possible future meeting between the President and the Dalai Lama, Ma added. In contrast, Ma suggested, September visits by the Dalai Lama to the Czech Republic and Slovakia were unlikely to result in anything more than the strident voicing of PRC objections.

Wrangling over Dai Qing's Participation

¶ 13. (C) In a September 24 meeting with PolOff, German Embassy Cultural Affairs Officer Conrad Hassler said that the Book Fair organizers had sent ten invitations to the General Administration for Press and Publications (GAPP) for a September 12 symposium titled "China and the World - Perceptions and Realities" to be distributed to Chinese invitees, including dissident author Dai Qing. Dai did not receive her invitation, however, so the private PEN Society issued her an invitation, which was required to obtain a German visa. Dai's flight to the event was cancelled for unknown reasons and she was forced to make last-minute alternate travel arrangements, according to Hassler. He added that a deal had been reached between the Book Fair organizers and GAPP to allow Dai to attend as an audience member but not make statements or appear on a discussion panel. However, Dai did in fact participate in a panel that included a former Chinese Ambassador to Germany, who left in protest along with his whole delegation, although they all eventually came back. Hassler said the PRC Ambassador later characterized his walk-out as an act of "freedom of expression."

Book Fair Organizers Caught Off Guard by Chinese Reaction

¶ 14. (C) Hassler said that the Book Fair organizers had not anticipated these problems, noting that PRC objections had not surfaced until recently even though the Book Fair had had a contract with the GAPP since in 2007. With some 600 events planned, and an official 500-person Chinese delegation led by Vice President Xi Jinping expected, organizers did not wish to create problems for their guest of honor country. Hassler

BEIJING 00002866 002.2 OF 002

stated Germany was firm in its position that the Book Fair was a private event, and the German government could not make some of the guarantees Beijing sought. For example, GAPP officials at the 11th hour objected to the Taiwan stand at the fair labeled (including in the printed catalogues) "Taiwan" (which was also the case in past Fairs).

Opening Ceremony, Rebiya Kadeer Appearance Concern PRC

¶ 15. (C) Hassler said the PRC was especially nervous about the Fair's opening ceremony October 14, adding that China had still not publicly announced its keynote speaker for the ceremony. Of particular concern to Chinese officials was the potential attendance of dissident Rebiya Kadeer. Hassler said that Rebiya Kadeer might attend as an author, but he did not expect her to be featured at any events. Her participation remained uncertain, however, as the Fair organizers seemed unsure how to handle the situation, according to Hassler.

PRC Strategy: Consistent in Words but Selective in Action

¶ 16. (C) Negative outcomes at the Book Fair would certainly affect bilateral relations between Germany and China, insisted MFA European Affairs Department Germany Division Deputy Director Du Xiaohui September 29. Likewise, MFA European Affairs Department East European Division Third Secretary Li Hun told PolOff September 22, the Dalai Lama's visits to Bratislava and Prague had affected bilateral relations, especially with the Czech Republic because the Czech Prime Minister had met with the Dalai Lama, whereas in Slovakia he did not meet with any government officials. Separately, Professor Ma assessed that negative effects on relations with Slovakia and the Czech Republic would not go beyond words, "since they were not big countries with influence."

Slovaks, Czechs on Dalai Lama Visits: Life Goes On

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¶7. (C) During a September 14 meeting with PolOff, Slovak Embassy Political Counselor Miroslav Tomo insisted his government had not known about the Dalai Lama's invitation from NGOs until reported by the press, and the PRC had no choice but to condemn the visit. However, he emphasized, no Slovak leadership met with the Dalai Lama due to the fact several economic bilateral initiatives were being pursued. Tomo mentioned Slovakia's small size made it hard to attract PRC interest, but bilateral economic ties, important to Slovakia, were growing, particularly in automobiles and electronics. In addition, he said the Slovakian Minister of Transport would soon visit to discuss the building of logistic and transport projects in China.

Czechs Not Worried  
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¶8. (C) Czech Embassy Political Counselor Ivana Grollova told PolOff September 18 that the Czech government was not worried about possible Chinese retaliation. She said the Chinese rhetoric was the "same as usual," and since Czech economic interests with China were almost entirely within the EU framework, the Czech Republic could "hide behind" the EU, minimizing bilateral economic effects.

HUNTSMAN